

State of Nebraska

LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

For Rural Health Professionals

Who is eligible?

Physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants practicing the specialties of family practice, general internal medicine, general pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, general surgery, and psychiatry are eligible to apply for the Nebraska Loan Repayment Program. Dentists must specialize in general dentistry, pediatric dentistry, or oral surgery. Clinical psychologists, master's level mental health professionals (Licensed Mental Health Practitioners), pharmacists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists are also eligible. Eligibility does not guarantee acceptance into the program.

Where are the practice sites?

Practice sites eligible for loan repayment must be located within shortage areas designated for each specialty by the Nebraska Rural Health Advisory Commission.

How does the program work?

Communities within shortage areas must apply to become approved loan repayment sites, and must agree to provide an equal match to state dollars (up to \$20,000 per year for three years.) The local match may come from any source.

Communities must do their own recruiting, using the availability of loan repayment as a recruiting tool. Communities are urged to develop practice opportunities that offer a group practice environment with call sharing, coverage, and other professional support.

When a new practitioner has matched to an approved loan repayment practice site, the practitioner must apply to the Loan Repayment Program, providing documentation of qualified educational debts. The practitioner must agree to a **three-year practice commitment and accept Medicaid patients**. Leaving a shortage area prior to completing the 3-year practice obligation will result in the health professional repaying 125% of the funds received through the program.

What are the benefits?

Nurse practitioners, physician assistants, master's level mental health professionals, pharmacists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists may receive up to \$20,000 per year (\$10,000 from local funds; \$10,000 from state funds) to be used toward the repayment of commercial or government educational loans. Physicians, dentists, and clinical psychologists may receive up to \$40,000 per year (\$20,000 from local funds; \$20,000 from state funds). The actual amount awarded will depend on the individual practitioner's educational debt load and the availability of funds. Funds awarded are taxable as ordinary income.

Who operates the program?

The Nebraska Office of Rural Health administers the Loan Repayment Program. For more information, contact the Office at P.O. Box 95007, Lincoln NE 68509-5007, 402/471-2337.

